

MEMORANDUM FOR: DCI 25 MAY 1984

Bob Gates' notes on Saturday's terrorism seminar at State.

For whatever it is worth, I'm not sure I agree with Bob's comments in para 4 on sending briefing teams on the road. I've been involved with a few of these Truth Squads in the past (e.g., the team that carried the word to Africa on Libyan involvement in Chad), and they often come across as condescendingly preaching to the choir. In most places where we have decent liaison, the mechanism for getting the word to the top exists and is exercised. What our foreign friends want is tactical intelligence and solid advice and training in stopping terrorism. Those countries that turn a blind eye to terrorists-in-transit in exchange for being spared themselves (such as Yugoslavia) aren't going to turn around on the basis of a Washington-based briefing team.

Dick

Date

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Seminar on Terrorism at State

FROM:

Robert M. Gates
Deputy Director for Intelligence

EXTENSION

NO.

DDI #01937-84

DATE

26 March 1984

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

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COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

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I spoke with Mr. Casey about the enclosed on Saturday. Please be sure this gets to him soonest.

Bob Gates

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DDI #01937-84

26 March 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
National Intelligence Officer for
Counterterrorism

FROM : Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT : Seminar on Terrorism at State

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1. Secretary Shultz hosted a 4 1/2 hour seminar on terrorism at the Department on March 24th. Among the attendees were Secretary Shultz and Weinberger, Judge Webster, John Poindexter, Tony Motley, Ron Spiers, Dick Murphy, Noel Koch (Defense) and several others. The list of government and private sector panelists is attached.

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2. The session divided into two parts. The first focused on the nature of the problem, with a good deal of discussion about the kinds of threats we should be paying attention to. It also tried to distinguish between terrorism and insurgency and the tactics used against each. I was asked to describe how we prioritize our work. I indicated that we watch 200 to 300 groups, but direct much of our effort against those groups that target the US, our interests, or our friends. Moreover, increasingly we focus on groups which are state supported -- principally by Iran, Syria and Libya. The point was made that while overall number of terrorist incidents outside of the Middle East has not increased appreciably since the late 1970's, the events in Lebanon and specifically in Beirut in 1983 crystalized for the first time the dangers of state supported terrorism. Also, for the first time we were able to document this connection unambiguously.

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3. The second part of the session, and the most lively, focused on what response the United States could make to terrorism, particularly state supported terrorism. There was general agreement that the most dangerous course of all is to allow countries like Iran to carry out such acts and suffer no penalty. There also was general agreement that diplomatic and economic sanctions have very limited value and that the United States is not in a position to get a large number of nations to go along or to sustain sanctions ourselves.

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4. Attention then turned to the role of the military and intelligence. With regard to the latter, there was a good deal of conversation about making more intelligence information available to educate the public as to the nature of the threat. I made our concerns about this known as well as the limited usefulness of this approach. I was asked about the degree of our sharing of information with other nations and Ambassador Sayre responded before I could say anything that such cooperation and sharing was quite extensive. The question was asked whether more could be done and I volunteered that we sometimes had no knowledge whether the information we provide on the role of countries like Iran and Syria percolates up from those with whom we have a dialogue to their senior policy and political figures. I suggested that if the policy community thought there were merit in the idea, we might emulate the senior level teams that were sent out from CIA along with policy people during the Cuban missile crisis to brief foreign leaders on the details of our evidence. This would at least make known at very high levels the extent of our information and allow us to put it in context. [REDACTED]

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5. There was considerable talk about the US concentration on security and deterrents, and general agreement that this approach was inadequate -- that the United States had to go on the offensive to prove that other nations could not get away with these acts. There was discussion (by others) of covert action and even the need to be willing to assassinate terrorist leaders to make the threat real. Judge Webster noted the requirement that whatever actions we take have "legitimacy" and that one danger of such operations would be to bring hit squads to our own shores in retaliation. There was also some talk of military retaliation although one problem cited was the inability to retaliate against a target specifically associated with a specific terrorist group, and the need to attack the ultimate patron. Several of us observed that it was unclear that the American people were prepared to support these kinds of retaliation, much less on a sustained basis and particularly if our retaliation provoked counterstrikes against American targets. [REDACTED]

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6. As we went around the table with concluding remarks, I directed mine at our policy colleagues, saying that while there was a good deal that was ambiguous and unknowable about the terrorist threat, that I could virtually guarantee that Iran, Syria and probably Libya would carry out further terrorist attacks against American targets. Knowing this, the United States should use the time it has to plan in some detail a menu of possible counteraction that could be implemented quickly after a terrorist attack. [REDACTED]

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7. A couple of interesting observations. The fellow from IBM essentially argued that the problem would diminish if we ignored it. He suggested that we give too much attention to the problem and that this builds an hysteria about it. He noted that

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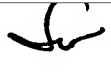
there are more homicides in New York City every Saturday night than there are terrorist casualties over a period of a month or two. The fellow from Pan Am essentially limited his remarks to soliciting government help for business in combatting the problem. The central focus of the Justice representative remarks was to plead for more intelligence. Bernard Lewis suggested that the terrorist threat posed by radical Islamic forces is almost certain to grow and suggested that we perhaps not only consider forceable retaliation but also corruption (bribery) as one way of getting to one or another individual. Sarkesian focused on distinguishing between terrorists and insurgents or revolutionary groups. [redacted]

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8. All in all it was a fairly lively session but it certainly had one common thread: the absolute imperative for the United States to develop and use an offensive retaliatory capability that goes beyond diplomatic and economic measures. I don't think the message was lost on Shultz, Weinberger, Poindexter, and the other government officials who were present. It would have been helpful to have heard their reaction if one or two members of Congress had been present at the seminar. [redacted]

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[redacted]
Robert M. Gates

Attachment:
As Stated

cc: [redacted]

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DDI #01937-84
26 March 1984

SUBJECT: Seminar on Terrorism at State (S)

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